

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5119

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As Reported by Senate Committee On:  
Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections, January 24, 2011  
Ways & Means, March 22, 2011

**Title:** An act relating to cancellation of the 2012 presidential primary.

**Brief Description:** Canceling the 2012 presidential primary.

**Sponsors:** Senators Pridemore and Kline; by request of Secretary of State and Governor Gregoire.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections: 1/18/11, 1/24/11 [DP, w/oRec].  
Ways & Means: 2/03/11, 3/22/11 [DP, w/oRec].

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Pridemore, Chair; Prentice, Vice Chair; Swecker, Ranking Minority Member; Chase and Nelson.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senator Roach.

**Staff:** Diane Smith (786-7410)

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON WAYS & MEANS

**Majority Report:** Do pass.

Signed by Senators Murray, Chair; Kilmer, Vice Chair, Capital Budget Chair; Zarelli, Ranking Minority Member; Parlette, Ranking Minority Member Capital; Brown, Conway, Fraser, Hatfield, Hewitt, Honeyford, Kastama, Keiser, Kohl-Welles, Pflug, Pridemore, Regala, Rockefeller, Schoesler and Tom.

**Minority Report:** That it be referred without recommendation.

Signed by Senators Baumgartner, Baxter and Holmquist Newbry.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Staff:** Steve Jones (786-7440)

**Background:** Following the 1988 presidential election, an issue with the process for selecting delegates to the national political party conventions at which presidential candidates are nominated, prompted an initiative which was adopted by the Legislature establishing a presidential preference primary.

Presidential preference primaries were held in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2008. The 2004 presidential preference primary was cancelled.

Unless the date is changed by statutory process, the presidential preference primary for the 2012 presidential election will be held on the fourth Tuesday in May, 2012.

**Summary of Bill:** No presidential primary is held in 2012.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Committee/Commission/Task Force Created:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections):** PRO: Political parties don't represent the interests of the citizens; they want us to adopt the national model rather than our nonpartisan model. If this bill is not passed, it will lead to the demise of the top 2 system. While this primary has many merits, it costs \$10 million. In these times of budgetary crisis, the cost should be avoided. The bill suspends the primary; it is reinstated after 2012.

CON: This bill is contrary to the will of the people expressed in an initiative. Without this primary, military and overseas, elderly, and working voters are disenfranchised because they can't participate in the caucuses. The Republicans always use this primary to choose at least a portion of their delegates. This primary is not a frill. People often do not participate in caucuses and this, the presidential preference primary, offers them a way to participate.

**Persons Testifying (Government Operations, Tribal Relations & Elections):** PRO: Julie Anderson, Pierce County Auditor.

CON: Luke Esser, Chairman, Washington State Republican Party; Tom Niewulis, Jr., citizen.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony (Ways & Means):** PRO: A broad cross-section of voters participate in the Presidential Preference Primary, which is preferable to the party caucus system, where fewer voters participate. However, the political parties are legally entitled to ignore the results of the presidential primary, so it becomes merely a beauty contest. Therefore, due to the state's fiscal situation, the cost savings outweigh the benefits of holding the primary.

**Persons Testifying (Ways & Means):** PRO: Secretary of State Sam Reed.